

64 East 21 street
adj. Calvary Church

To the Rev. Dr. Hawks
with the kind regards
of S. A. D.

By

Wm. L. G. M. D.

A SERMON

IN BEHALF OF

St. Luke's Home for Destitute Christian Females.

Ex Libris

SEYMOUR DURST

t' Fort nieuw Amsterdam op de Manhatans



FORT NEW AMSTERDAM



(NEW YORK), 1651.

*When you leave, please leave this book
Because it has been said
"Ever'thing comes t' him who waits
Except a loaned book."*

1800

AVERY ARCHITECTURAL AND FINE ARTS LIBRARY
GIFT OF SEYMOUR B. DURST OLD YORK LIBRARY

The Church's Ministrative Care.

A

SERMON

PREACHED IN ST. LUKE'S CHURCH, NEW YORK CITY,

St. Luke's Day, 1851,

IN BEHALF OF

THE OBJECT THEN PROPOSED AND COMMENCED,

VIZ :

St. Luke's Home for Destitute Christian Females.

BY THE RECTOR.

Isaac H. Fittle

NEW YORK.

1851.

EVERY
CLASSIC
AA
5235
N4L13
T38



SERMON.

ONLY THEY WOULD THAT WE SHOULD REMEMBER THE POOR: THE SAME WHICH I ALSO WAS FORWARD TO DO.—*Gal.* II. 10.

EVER since the Lord of life took to himself a body like ours, there has been felt among all who are His, *a deep reverence for man's body*. By His very incarnation, there henceforth dwelt in humanity, a fresh, an intenser feeling of sympathy for every form of human suffering. From Christ, as He stood among us, in our nature, there gushed from His feeling bosom towards the surrounding distress, a compassionateness which no weariness could lull, and which no toil and fatigue could blunt. Had His "mission" to earth been simply to assuage bodily ailments, the foundation then laid would have been built upon by every generation of mankind, in honor of the World's Benefactor, the real lover of his kin.

And yet, the fountain of health and alleviation which in His person was opened in Judea, and which sent out streams of life and supplies,—leaving restoration and gratitude to mark His humble steps, as the green line of fresh grass stretching through the parched meadow betokens the under running of the fertilizing rill,—this fountain of Christ was never designed to dry up, on His visible departure.

It was opened, indeed, *miraculously*, like the first trees of creation, with their fruit already ripened. But it was to continue living and operative, like nature's after produce, by the operation of energetic means. Christ's own beneficent healings,—His feeding the hungry,—His deep sympathy for the distressed and desolate, were but the first fruits of a gracious power, never intended to stop with His *visible* ministrations.

And it did not stop there. For where did we say the living spring of kindness and mercy started? Was it not in and through that body which enfolded "the divine nature"? And does not scripture tell us that this body is Christ's Church? So that in some true, though mysterious way, the Church—the blessed company of the redeemed—is the body of Christ,—an extension of His own nature.

That, then, which characterized our Lord personally, must still characterize His body. True, mercy and love, and kindly act, and supplying hand, are no longer displayed in their first *miraculous* exercise; yet their fountain—Christ our life—is lodged here. And what first exhibited itself supernaturally, afterwards flows on ordinarily, as the stream quietly followed the Israelites, though its first gushings was from a rock smitten by the rod of Moses.*

Thus through the Apostles in living connexion with Christ's body, and then through those who on all sides have from age to age been joined on to the Apostolic fellowship, has Christ, the well-spring of alleviation for suffering humanity, been unfolding Himself; and now by us, as embodying His spirit, would He still reach

* Exodus, xvii : 6.

forth the hand of charity to succor the woes and distresses of all His kindred flesh.

The nearer the fountain, the more, unquestionably, was its miraculous power displayed. Next, the disciples, almost like their Lord, were enabled to meet the calls of disease and want. Yet the more ordinary and settled workings of effective relief, was recognized at the beginning in the cheerful sacrifices of toil and money. Those of possessions freely shared them as every man had need.* Female devotion softened and brightened all around a departing Dorcas.† The feeling heart of the once fierce Macedonian‡ beats with kindly pulsations towards the necessitous brethren of Judea. Not even the depths of Achaia's|| poverty could quench their liberality to the poor saints at Jerusalem, who, for their faith in the Lord Jesus, were suffering every earthly loss. All seemed to realize, that as "Christ was *in* them the hope of glory," they must put on Christ and wear His outward garb of mercy and good works. So treasured in all *hearts* was the remembrance of those words of the Lord Jesus, "how he said it was more blessed to give than receive,"§ that the saying scarcely needed a formal record in the holy Gospels.

Thus Christ went on reproducing himself in spirit and self-denying charities and laborious sympathy. And his followers, throwing out the hidden life of their master in those rich deeds of true affection, soon made Christian charity so proverbial, that even in

* Acts ii : 44. This community implied by no means a communion of *possession*, but merely of *use*. See Mosheim's His. Commu. vol. i. p. 152. Murdock's trans.

† Acts ix : 39.

‡ Rom. xv : 26.

|| 2 Corin. viii : 2.

§ Acts xx : 35.

Tertullian's time the world was forced to confess, "See how these Christians love one another."

Indeed, the heathen would have it that "Christians had some unknown characters imprinted on their bodies, and these characters had the virtue of inspiring them with love for one another." Lucian, an early satirical writer against Christianity, does in fact but speak words of their praise, when he declares that the "Lawgiver of Christians makes them believe they are all brethren;" and, adds the satirist, "it is incredible what pains and diligence they exercise in every way to succor one another." And Julian, the bitter apostate, knowing the folly of attacking religion with open violence, ordered the pagan priest to vie with, and even surpass, what he terms the charity of the superstitious Christians. "For it is a shame," he adds, "that the impious Galileans should, in their abounding benevolence, not only provide for their own poor, but for ours also."

Thus did the Gospel, in all its ministrative love, become emphatically a Gospel for the poor. In the city of Alexandria alone, more than five hundred persons were kept for the pious office of attending on the sick. And when the number of captives perishing from hunger, had exhausted for their redemption the alms of the Christians in Numidia, their large-soul Bishop declared, that in such a strait God did not require at the altar their precious vessels; and he caused the massive service to be melted down and paid out for the ransom of the prisoners.*

*See in Saurin's Discourse on Almsgiving, these and other instances of the spirit of charity among the early Christians.

Truly, our early brethren proved—as they called themselves—“Christopheri,” bearing Christ within them. They studded every land where they dwelt with pious foundations, hospitals, asylums. The Bishop of Constantinople says, consider among how many poor, among how many widows and orphans, this Church distributes the charity of one rich man. Three thousand pensioners were on its list.

Thus was handed down to each successive rank in Christ, this lively comment on the doctrine of their Master. The pass-word of Christians, whether clergy or laity, seemed to be, “Remember the poor;” and yet the charge was apparently needless; for the response was promptly returned by the “faithful” sentinels: “The same I am also forward to do.”

“*Remember the Poor*”—The Church’s trust.* The striking note of Christianity. The pass-word of believers. The true mark for the Great Shepherd in knowing his own. Love’s binding cord of sympathy and fellowship. That which causes us to feel we are all one in Christ Jesus; which acknowledges we brought nothing into this world, and that we can carry nothing out; and that having food and raiment bids us be content.

REMEMBER THE POOR. I cannot announce this legacy of Christ without trembling for myself, for you, for the Church in our day. It is a fearful subject for earnest contemplation! It is so awful, so appalling, so withering in its rebuke. I do not wonder all speedily turn from it, unless they are deeply thoughtful of the last-day-account of their stewardship.

The poor of Christ,—those whom He once “wash-

* “Then saith He to the disciple, ‘Behold thy mother!’” John xix : 27.

ed and sanctified,"—thrust out from their brethren into damp cellars and cold garrets, so stiffened by the moist walls, or benumbed with cold, as to have scarce left faculties for spiritual ejaculations, even had they hearts warmed by experienced kindnesses! The poor of Christ—fastened down to their tedious, wearing toil; the feeble and decrepid and almost blind made a prey to the grinding, iron hand of *covetousness*,—trying with strained eye to point aright their unsteady needle, on the garment of a long day and midnight's incessant stitch, in order to gain six, or eight, or by better favor ten pence, to provide a scanty morsel, and prevent being turned shelterless into the street.*

THE POOR OF CHRIST;—without substantial fellowship;—fearing that in sickness no soothing hand will minister to them;—that in death none devout will bear them to their burial; but that their bodies, though made temples of the HOLY GHOST, and which Christianity bids us so sacredly to revere, may yet, like a thousand others, have scarcely enough of mother earth to cover them in her bosom for a month.† Oppressed with this fear, those who have saved a little are found driven to the expedients of voluntary associations;—giving to these the time, the saved pence, and the warm sympathy and kind words, that ought all to be won and garnered up in Christ's kingdom, and form a treasury of sympathy, and alms, and poor man's blessing and prayers, and rich man's abundance, for disbursement as every man has need.

Oh, the poor in Christ! Our aged and infirm brethren; once well to do in life; once surrounded by rich

*It is only those constantly among the poor, who are at all aware how manifold are such instances.

†See a late Report in regard to some of the shocking interments of the poor.

friends, or sympathizing relatives, now out-lived, or no longer at hand. These honored servants of Christ—our brethren—*homeless*—fearful that some common receptacle for the vile and degraded and the impious, shall be the home of their lingering days; the bar to further religious privileges; their effectual removal from the *sanctuary of their God*, that one remaining spot on earth of their devout longings and solace!

Brethren, this state of things is alarming. Yet it is an aspect of the present state of the Church, which not to ponder on is madness. Both bodies and souls of Christ's poor are neglected and dying. They have not homes either for their bodies or spirits. Few of the wealthy make provision for the destitute in the same Church with themselves, or elsewhere.* Seldom any parish puts a stop to renting pews, so long as there is a paying applicant for a seat. Instead of those with means making up the necessary support of the parish by their increased individual liberality, an assessment goes on till the building is pretty effectually emptied of all but the more able.

This state of things cannot long continue. If the spirit is abroad and reanimating Christian breasts,—that spirit which made suffering and pain and sorrow sacred and holy,—it will thaw this ice about the heart; it will drive out these abominations from God's house of prayer, and go on to reveal itself in those hospitals for the sick, poor, aged, and strangers; in increased church accommodations; in those homes for the outcast and desolate, which are the perpetual appendages of

* How refreshing the exceptions where a Church is built by a rich individual, and chapels are provided by wealthy parishes.

Christ's living body. Through these expressive means is it, that Christ's compassionateness ever seeks the ends of His mercy. They are the peculiar note of His Holy Catholic Church.

I know the world here imitates. Benevolence is such a favorite mask, and one withal so lovely, so sure of winning, that all institutions setting themselves up as Christ's kingdom, or its rival, show their lists of noble charities. Yet, it has been truly remarked, "they do but imitate the ministries of manifold charities through which the mystical body of Christ consoles meek, broken-hearted, and mourning spirits. At the out-set, sects are always distinguished by a great profession of sympathy with the spiritual and bodily sufferings of mankind. They found themselves on the alledged neglect or inability of the Church to minister to the contrite and the afflicted. Their strength lies in their popularity, in their moving affectionateness, and forward profession of disinterested solicitude, and in stealing away the hearts of the people. But this lasts only for a time. The first zeal dies when the point is gained; labor and care grow slack, and self-denying charity cold and scant. * * * * Howsoever long they may simulate the notes of the Church, adopt its language, and affect its charity, they sink by mere exhaustion at last."* Yearning hearts are at last drawn away from them by strong vital attractions of fervent charity in the Church.

And just as this her charity grows more and more fervent and spreading, shall we perceive the erring, the

* This was the noble and well deserved testimony borne by Manning to the Church of his first love, and which had sustained and nourished him to his rare spiritual attainments.

straying, and the bewildered, return to the fold of the true Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.

This Christian love, brethren, is undeniably at work afresh in our generation. In the ordinary workings of grace, it is extending from the heart of Christian to Christian. Its holy influences are all abroad. I trust they reach here;—that they are the moving spring of what shall be so humbly commenced to-day. Otherwise I should deem the undertaking presumptuous. I should deem it futile. “Except the Lord build the house their labor is but lost that build it.”

But nothing is weak that issues from the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, and is watered with the dew of His heavenly grace and blessing. Hoping, trusting, that what we are about to undertake is the prompting of this blessed Spirit, it does not seem arrogant to propose our work, and quietly thus to make our beginning.

Therefore, God willing—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in whom alone all that is strong, all that is holy, must be begun, continued and ended—we make this commencement of St. Luke’s Home for Destitute and Aged Christians.

I feel that this announcement will accord with all the emotions of your souls. *If it only could be*, you would regard it as something most devoutly to be desired. But if *it ought* to be, then I suppose it can be. It is not of course a work of ease, or the work of a day or year, for its full accomplishment. How soon, or whether speedily, it may approach to consummation, is to be left with patience to God’s blessing on faithful endeavors.

The apparent feebleness of any beginning is not fatal to its final success. In standing on a level of limited meadow-land, embosomed high up among the peaks of the noble Catskill, may be seen here and there slight marshy pools—little sheets of still water round about with their glassy faces, and running off in quiet trickling streams. But what becomes of the rivulets, whether they soon dry up, lost by absorption and evaporation, or whether they combine at length, inviting into their channel the tributary rills and mountain torrents, till the force of these accessions have scooped out a channel sufficiently deep, and a bosom broad enough to form one of the important rivers of the country, would be utterly uncertain to one who did not know that he was standing at the head of the Delaware. And we who cannot look into the stream of time beyond our present stand-point, can little fathom the issue of our undertaking.

But in this, beloved, we should all agree, that if after many years we were to realize a permanent Home for as many as twenty, or even ten, of the weary and perplexed and destitute in their Christian pilgrimage; if we can have secured a place of resort to these our unfortunate, our sorely tried, our reduced fellow-heirs of life, we shall have engaged in a work most pleasing to Christ, and which, for His alone merits, He will kindly accept at the last day.

And why may it not be accomplished? Is there not continued to us, and now again at work, that primitive spirit—the spirit of Christ—the spirit which clothes itself in works of mercy, in deeds of charity?

Surely not for centuries past have so many noble monuments been raised in honor of our blessed Lord, as within the last twenty-five years. Zion is again putting on her beautiful garments. On all sides go up her walls of salvation. Re-opening are her gates of praise. Once more is yearning love embracing the poor and outcast, and charity is protecting under her kindly folds the needy and the delicate from the cold blasts of adversity. The clearest evidence that the revived work is of God, is witnessed to in the growing responsibility for the bodies no less than at the same time and place for the souls of men. Christians are again *seeing Christ in his poor*. They are entering afresh into the deep import of those words, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." And hearts will grow yet more tender and enlarged. Nobler gifts will come, and with greater frequency. Godlike sacrifices will open the way for ampler appropriations for Christian purposes. The first drops of the fertilizing rain are already falling. Believers are beginning to shrink from consuming upon themselves and their families for their own enjoyment, all their richest gifts and expenditures. And when dying, it is seen they have not forgotten the exhortation enjoined in the visitation of the sick,* "that they should be liberal to the poor." In England and America are the hearts and hands of private wealth and individual means nobly unlocking for the outflowing of most gracious almsdeeds. Some of our institutions† most vital to the Church's pros-

*See Rubric in the Office for the Visitation of the Sick, immediately following the Creed.

† The Khone legacies to the General Theological Seminary, of \$90,000, and \$20,000 to the Protestant Episcopal Sunday School Union.

perity, have just been munificently succored with most timely bequests.

It is from such sources I meekly trust will come supplies to the charitable work of this day's commencement. There are many, whose connexion with *St. Luke's* at one time and another, will lead them to make some provision for an object of this nature. There always are those connected with various parishes who are glad to be pointed to such a permanent opportunity of effecting the greatest good. There are always more or less of those who, without families, without dependent relations, need but to know there is such an Institution, to decide them to leave the whole, or a portion of their means, to be invested in so certain a way of blessing the afflicted and consoling the lonely destitute. There are those who by their own trials will be glad to leave even of their little to alleviate the lot of others so much more homeless and dependent than themselves. And when duty and authority admonish to make his will, who will fail to place something where it shall perpetuate a work still doing after his death the fervent desires of his heart. This is one class of expected aid.

But it is, it ought to be, from the *living*, we principally look for succor. And as it is not a mere ordinary work, so it must expect alms beyond those for the ordinary and general offerings for the poor.

God's ancient Church in Jewry, the Church of Christ for centuries, and more or less of her members in every age, well knew the nature of *thank-offerings*. These are spontaneous expressions of signal mercies. When sickness and disease have been

warded off; when epidemics and pestilences have left us unharmed; when God has raised us up from threatening illness; when dangers and exposures have been escaped; when marked losses have been avoided; when happy deaths of our friends have been granted, and safe deliverances in great perils of body, or mind, or spirit; when bequests or legacies are enjoyed; in any or all of such occasions, the heart, touched with Christian love, has ever desired to give some substantial token of its gratitude. *To this source*, from month to month, in addition to the usual offerings, may this charitable foundation look for specific appropriations, marked for its merciful use.

And, then, there are always those full of good works and labor of love, to whom it would be sweet to make known such an object of charity, and whose appeals would be responded to by many sympathizing hearts, and many an open purse. I do not know who would pass it by with an indifferent breast. I cannot think one Christian would look coldly upon it.

But it is too unspeakable a mercy to be allowed to lift even a finger in God's service, and mingle one wishful entreaty in that ever-rising incense-cloud of Christ's intercession, to think of putting our hand to this holy work, and placing the first dollar on God's altar* for an acceptable oblation, without bethinking us of our own inherent unfitness and impotency, or without renewing our dedication to Christ, in deep penitence and unreserved purposes of amendment. Oh, how sanctified ought we to be to do work in God's

* The undertaking was solemnized by the Holy Communion.

holy Church—especially to work where we must be called continually to “hoping against hope.”

Therefore, on this altar of God, let us anew lay our whole hearts, as the chiefest, richest gift of His request. Then let us offer our souls and bodies as a living sacrifice in His service. Thus may our alms and oblations and prayers come up as an acceptable memorial before God.

If we have heretofore lived to ourselves, let us now resolve to live to Him that died for us. If we have been appropriating the good things to our present life-time, let us turn with a more feeling spirit to Lazarus, with scant clothing, scant food, and shelterless. Let us strive with less weariness, less fainting, to do the work of saints.

We can work but a little longer. Soon, even now with many, the shadows of the evening stretch out. The friends to receive us into everlasting habitations must be soon made. Noble purposes will speedily dissipate, if not clothed with the deeds designed. A few times more only will Christ pass you and meet you in His poor, and your opportunity is sealed. May God fill us with the fullness of holy clarity, through Jesus Christ, man’s loving and abiding Friend.

